



Portuguese Republic

World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth

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FIRST BALTIC SEA YOUTH MINISTERS CONFERENCE, HELD AT VISBY, SWEDEN, ON 5 AND 6 JUNE 1998

Note by the Conference secretariat

The Conference secretariat has the honour to make available to Conference participants, as received and in the language of submission only, the attached documents of the first Baltic Sea Youth Ministers Conference, which was held at Visby, Sweden, on 5 and 56 June 1998.



Ministry of the Interior

Conclusions of the chairing country on implementation of a plan of action for Baltic Sea Co-operation in the youth field - draft version

5-6th of June 1998 a first Baltic Sea Youth Minister Conference was held in Visby, Sweden. During the first day of the Conference a plan of action for Baltic Sea Co-operation in the youth field was adopted. In relation to the discussions held on the implementation of that plan of action, the chair concludes the following:

The Chairing country welcomes

- the proposal by Finland to assume responsibility for the development of youth research, notably by arranging a first Baltic Sea Youth Research Symposium in year 2000.
- the proposal by Finland to assume responsibility for looking into how a joint internet-server could be developed as a forum for information and communication on Baltic Sea youth Co-operation.
- the proposal by Germany to arrange a broad-based Baltic Sea Youth Conference in the year 2000 to evaluate the progress made and to outline the future co-operation.
- the proposal by Poland to arrange a follow-up Baltic Sea Youth Seminar in Poland in 1999,
- the proposal by Latvia to arrange in year 2000 a Baltic Sea Song and Dance festival for young people, as a concrete contribution from the Youth Field to the Cultural Co-operation between the Baltic Sea States.
- the proposal by Lithuania to establish a Baltic Sea Youth Centre in Lithuania and to arrange a meeting with the purpose to set up a network of Youth Centres in the Baltic Sea Region.

- the proposal by Finland to arrange a Baltic Sea Youth project competition, where the most interesting and innovative Baltic Sea Youth Project plan will be rewarded, and to welcome the other Baltic Sea States to contribute to the competition.

- the proposal by the Baltic Sea States Co-operation (BSSSC), the Swedish government and the Baltic Youth Forum to assume responsibility for conducting a study on how to focus and make common use of national resources for Baltic Sea Co-operation in the youth field, and to make a report on this subject well before the Baltic Sea Youth Conference in Germany in year 2000.

- the proposals by the National Agencies in the Region for the Youth for Europe programme to develop common activities within the programmes and to initiate common co-operation activities with other Regions in Europe in general, and in particular

- *the proposal by the Polish National Agency to arrange a partner finding activity in relation to the Youth Expo in Gdansk, Poland in oktober/november 1998,

- * the proposal by the Swedish Agency to arrange a training seminar for youth trainers in the Baltic Sea States in 1998,

- * the proposal by the Danish Agency to arrange a large partner-finding Fair for the Baltic Sea States concerned in Denmark in April 1999, where a number of youth projects from each country will be invited,

- * the opportunities presented for youth workers to take part in short study visits already planned in Warsaw, Poland and to Estonia in the autumn of 1998,

- the proposal by the Polish National Youth Council to invite all National Youth Councils within the Region to a contact seminar in the near future.

The chairing country further welcomes

- the first Conference on Barents Region Co-operation in the Youth Field, organized by the Finnish Ministry of Education and the European Commission, and to be held jointly in Finland and Murmansk, Russia in Oktober 1998,

- the initiative by the Regional Council in Kalmar County in Sweden to arrange a Baltic Sea Youth Parliament/Assembly for secondary school pupils, to be held in 1999.

- the initiative by the Council of the Stockholm-Mälar Region to arrange a "Baltic Sea Youth Forum" in September 1999 for secondary school pupils and teachers from all the Baltic Sea States,
- the initiative by the the regional Youth Council of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany, to arrange a Baltic Sea Youth Conference with the theme "A social Society - we'll build it", to be held 12-19 September 1998, to which 18 youth representatives from each country will be invited,
- the Baltic-German Youth Summer Academy for youth leaders and youth workers to be held in Latvia in 21-28 June 1998,
- the existing possibilities for trainee placements for young people within the Region, which are offered by the Nordic Council through the programmes "Nordpraktik" and "Östjobb", and which are administered by the Nordic Association,
- the number of various Baltic Sea youth activities taking place within the Platform Network for Interregional Youth Exchanges,
- the development of the Baltic Sea Trade Union's youth Co-operation, where a number of smaller projects are in the process of being developed with the aim to establish a network of young people within trade unions,
- the development of the Baltic Sea Co-operation among neurological disabled people's organisations, as being presented at the Conference
- the development of the Youth Co-operation evolving between young people living on the seven major islands of the Baltic Sea through the project Wave Breakers,
- the development of Baltic Sea Youth Seminars particularly focusing on democracy issues, arranged by the organisation Young European Federalists (JEF),
- the development of a number of youth seminars centred around various political issues of common interest for the Baltic Sea Region, being organized by the Young Christian Democrats in a number of Baltic Sea States,
- the development of training activities taking place within the Nordic-Baltic Minority Youth Network, in particular the international seminar on European Integration and the role of minorities youth,
- the development of environmental youth activities taking place with the project Hydron men Ariston,

Regarding dissemination of the plan of action adopted and the results achieved during the Conference, the Chairing country concludes;

- to formally send the plan of action to the Council of Baltic Sea States asking them to draw attention to youth policy co-operation on their agenda.
- to send the Final report of the Conference as a contribution from the Baltic Sea Region to the World Youth Ministers Conference, which will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, in August 1998
- to ask all the Baltic Sea States to distribute the plan of action and the Conclusions on implementation to the relevant regional and local institutions who are involved in Baltic Sea Youth Co-operation,

The chairing country also

- acknowledges the central role in the development of Baltic Sea Youth Co-operation played by the Baltic Youth Office of the Regional Youth Council of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany,
- acknowledges the important work done within the Baltic Youth Forum, as a platform for the National Youth Councils in the Region, in developing Baltic Sea Youth Co-operation,
- takes note of the will expressed by several youth representatives to increase the flexibility and the user-friendliness of the various youth programmes and funding possibilities existing and to make room also for innovative initiatives which does not fit in to the ordinary funding criteria.
- takes note of the possibilities for funding mobility projects for groups of disadvantaged youth through the Interrail Mobility Fund administered by the Council of Europe.
- takes note of the opinion expressed by several participants to develop other forms of information and guidance services for the Baltic Sea Co-operation in addition to the proposed joint internet web-site.
- takes note of the views expressed by the Baltic Sea States participating in the European Union youth programmes and not being members of the Union, on the formal obstacles existing for common projects between these States within the programmes,
- takes note of the need to remember and emphasise that the basis for increased co-operation in the youth field is people-to-people co-operation

on a grassroots level, particularly activities initiated by young people themselves,

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A plan of action for the future Baltic Sea Co-operation in the youth field -final version

Preamble

With regard to

- The Presidency Declaration of the Baltic Sea States Summit in Visby, Sweden, in May 1996, in which the "promotion of contacts between young people in the Baltic Sea Region" was underlined,
- the Baltic Sea Region initiative by the European Commission, acknowledging the European dimension of this co-operation,
- The Conference on the Baltic Sea Co-operation in the Youth Field in Helsinki, Finland, 30 May - 2 June 1997, and its final declaration, in which the conference invites the ministers responsible for youth affairs in the Baltic Sea region to organise a meeting and to prepare a proposal for a plan for co-ordination of Youth Actions in the Baltic Sea region to be discussed in the meeting of ministers,
- The European Commission's Agenda 2000 proposing a coherent programme to prepare the Central and Eastern European applicant countries for accession to the European Union,
- The conclusions of the fifth Conference on Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation, 27-28th October 1997 in Gdansk, Poland, in which the Conference called for the setting up of a Baltic Sea Youth Foundation,
- The European Council meeting in Luxembourg 12-13 December 1997, where the Council noted that Finland has submitted a proposal on a

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Northern Dimension for the policies of the Union and requested the Commission to present an interim report on this subject at the European Council meeting in 1998,

- The Presidency Declaration of the Baltic Sea States Summit in Riga, Latvia, in January 1998, in which it was stated "that people to people contacts, in particular youth exchanges, were the basis for better understanding and respect of the cultural diversity in the region",
- The final declaration of the Council of Europe Youth Minister conference in Bucharest 27-29 April 1998, in which it was declared as an objective of the Council of Europe's youth policy to strengthen regional co-operation in the youth field and in which the governments were recommended to encourage regional co-operation in the youth field,
- The conclusions of the seminar "Co-operation among youth organisations in the Baltic Sea", organised by the Norwegian Youth Council and Baltic Youth Forum in Oslo, Norway, 30 April- 4 May 1998, in which Baltic Sea Co-operation in the Youth Field in general and the role of youth organisations in particular was discussed.

The Ministers responsible for Youth Affairs in the Baltic Sea region have met in Visby 5-6 June together with representatives of national youth councils and representatives from the European Commission, the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe, the Youth for Europe national agencies and different regional bodies, in order to discuss Baltic Sea Co-operation in the Youth Field. The participants in the conference committed themselves to further develop co-operation, based on equal partnership among all actors, and have concluded the following:

Objectives

1. The aim is to develop among young people a common regional identity and understanding of our common cultural heritage, while respecting the cultural diversity of the region, for improvement of young people's living conditions and development of their potential. The aim is also to promote an active participation of young people in the development of democratic and pluralistic civic societies in the States of the Baltic Sea Region. These aims will be reached by strengthening Baltic Sea co-operation in the youth field, both in terms of increased youth mobility and youth participation within the region and in terms of increased contacts between youth policy structures in the Baltic Sea region.

Priorities

2. Without excluding co-operation in other areas, the priority areas for youth co-operation in the Baltic Sea region are;

- Baltic Sea Co-operation in the Youth Field in a European context, encouraging co-operation with other sub-regional areas of Europe and the expansion of the youth co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region to cover the Northern Europe as a whole,
- The role of youth participation and non-governmental youth organisations in the development of a democratic and tolerant society in general and the civil society in particular, including minority groups and give special attention to co-operation with disadvantaged and marginalized young people,
- Enhancement of young people's employability through non-formal education, the promotion of life long learning and the improvement of young people's international competence,
- Youth policy contribution to sectoral policies where Baltic Sea co-operation exists, particularly in the environmental field.

Actions

3. To agree on the following actions:

- to create favourable framework conditions for co-operation between young people in the region, through non-governmental youth organisations as well as other initiatives by young people themselves, and to provide reliable sources of financing for such co-operation,
- to initiate a study on how to focus and make common use of national resources for Baltic Sea co-operation in the youth field in order to increase multilateral youth projects,
- to improve the possibilities for support to Baltic Sea youth co-operation projects within the European Commission's Baltic Sea Region initiative,
- to develop common youth activities in the region within the European Union programmes, in particular the Youth for Europe-programme and the anticipated European voluntary service programme, striving for equal participation for all Baltic Sea States concerned,

- to initiate common training activities within the European Youth Fund and the European Youth Centres of the Council of Europe, or within joint training activities of Council of Europe and the European Union,
- to step up the exchange of experiences and information on a civil servant level, including study visits and short term exchange projects,
- to reduce barriers to youth mobility in the region in accordance with the recommendation on youth mobility of the Council of Europe (95)18, and to facilitate access to mobility programmes for all young people, including also disabled young people,
- to support the development of youth research networks within the Baltic Sea region and to encourage regular publications of data and conclusions of the youth research,
- to encourage politicians on all levels to participate in development of the youth policy and in Baltic Sea youth co-operation projects in particular,
- to promote regular mutual consultations among all actors involved in the Baltic Sea co-operation in the youth field.

Follow up

4. to follow up the conference by

- requesting the Council of Baltic Sea States to draw the attention to youth policy co-operation on their agenda, in particular as an element within the promotion of a people-to people partnership,
- giving the general responsibility of following up the development of Baltic Sea youth co-operation in relation to this plan of action to the chairing country of the Council of Baltic Sea States, calling upon the chairing State to co-operate with the predecessor and successor and to report annually on the development of youth co-operation to the European Community, the Council of Europe and the European Youth Forum,
- arranging a broad-based conference in the year 2000 to evaluate the progress made in co-operation and to outline the future,
- influencing all the relevant co-operation structures in the region to deal with youth policy questions and to take this plan of action into account wherever appropriate,
- developing and maintaining a common internet web-site, as a forum for information and communication on Baltic Sea youth co-operation.